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# SOME NOTES ON THE LUDDITES

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PROBLEMS OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

*Kiyoshi MATSUI* 1

SOME NOTES ON THE LUDDITES

*Fumio HOZUMI* 10

REGRESSION ANALYSIS AND ERRORS IN  
VARIABLES IN ECONOMIC TIME SERIES

*Osamu ABE* 39

THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF THE REVISION  
OF THE LAND TAX SYSTEM

*Junya SEKI* 47

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# SOME NOTES ON THE LUDDITES

Fumio HOZUMI\*

## (1) On the Scope of the Luddites

The Industrial Revolution in England was tinged with cases of acts of destroying machines, the climax, so to speak, of which was the Luddite movement. This, however, does not mean that all those responsible for destruction of industrial machines making appearance in the days of the Industrial Revolution were the Luddites. It is hardly thinkable that those responsible for the destruction of the spinning-jenny of Hargreaves at Blackburn in 1768, for instance, are referred to as the Luddites.

That the Luddite movement marks a page of the Industrial Revolution nobody would deny. There are, however, divergences of opinion as to the exact extent and scope of the particular movement. Marx apparently thought that the movement should be confined to the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century,<sup>1)</sup> while W. Cunningham defined it as an occurrence seen in 1816.<sup>2)</sup> William Cobbett wrote in 1816, "A Letter to the Luddites"<sup>3)</sup> which denotes that he understood the Luddite movement referred to the case of machine-destruction reported in that particular year. Otherwise there would have been nobody to receive the letter! This, indirectly, was confirmed by J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond.<sup>4)</sup> Curious, however, they failed to refer to the 1816 incident where they would have been supposed to, their reference being limited to the cases of 1811 and 1812.<sup>5)</sup> This view was shared by Paul Mantoux,<sup>6)</sup> who seems to go so far as to confine the scope only to the Nottingham Luddites in 1811 and 1812.<sup>7)</sup>

In view of such divergence of opinion seen among various scholars, a

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1) Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Band I, 10. Auflage, Hamburg, 1922, s. 394.

2) Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy, Vol. II, 3, edition. 1926.

3) Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, 30, November, 1816.

4) J. L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer 1760-1832*, 2. edition. 1920, p. 235.

5) *ibid*, Chapters IX-XI.

6) Paul Mantoux, *La Revolution Industrielle au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Essai sur les commencements de la grande industrie moderne en Angleterre, Paris 1906, p. 422.

7) Paul Mantoux, *The same*, translated into English by Marjorie Vernon, Revised Edition. p. 415. foot-note 4.

definition of the scope of the Luddite movement inevitably poses a question to be solved one way or another. The present writer is of the opinion that the key to the question should be sought in the nature of the movement itself. Once it is fully clarified, the Luddites will be easily distinguished from other machine-destroyers, and such distinction, once achieved, will naturally lead to a clarification of the whole issue.

What, then, is the nature of the Luddites? According to the present writer, five factors would be considered as relevant:

1. That the movement was undertaken by those who gave out that they were under the command of one leader by name of Ned Ludd;
2. That the movement was rampant mainly in the Midlands and the North;
3. That the movement had a strong organisation and succeeded in keeping secret under oath and strict discipline;
4. That the movement was not local and sporadic, but was extensive over a wide area under a pre-planned program; and
5. That the movement was not intent on machine-destruction alone but was tinged even with revolutionary inclinations.

It should be noted, in this connection, that the factors 3 and 4 are evidently a matter of degree. It is always more or less hard to define an degree. By the way, taking oath, among the Englishmen, is not a rare thing. Referring to factor 1, again, who, after all, was the man known as Ned Ludd? His identity 'is shrouded in mystery.'<sup>8)</sup> Further, it would be thought that factor 2, referring to the site of the movement, is never competent enough to distinguish the Luddites from other machine-destroyers, for the incidents at Bluckburn, in which the spinning-jenny were destroyed, did occur in this area. Seen in this light, each factor would be deprived of its competency as conducive to a clarification of the true Luddites as distinguished from other machine-destroyers. It should be conceded, however, that a combination of all these factors would be sufficiently relevant to explain the nature of the true Luddites.

Thus, the Luddites should be clearly distinguished from others engaged in machine-destruction, and it would be safe to define them as follows. Marx's view, for one thing, is too extensive. It will never serve to tell them from others. On the contrary, Cunningham's interpretation, to say the least, was too narrow-scoped. Limiting the scope and extent of the Luddites to 1816 without ever referring to either 1811 or 1812, would be beside

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8) for example, see The Report of Proceedings at York Special Commission, January 1813, p. vii.

the point as if alluding to Priest Kenko by referring to his "Personal Collections" but failing to his better-known work, "Tsure-Zure Gusa" (or "Random Notes"). Thus, it was right and proper that Hammonds, in devoting several chapters to this particular movement, deliberately dealt with the cases of 1811 and 1812. It was unconvincing, however, that they failed to write about those of 1816. It would be proper, thus, to define that the Luddite movement was at first rampant in 1811 and 1812, and, that, after a lapse into inactivity for several years, resurged again in 1816, engaging in acts of machine-destruction in the Midland and the North.

By the way, to the question why those answering all these factors are to be classified as Luddites, the answer would be nothing but that it was because they carried all these factors. This evidently is no way to answer the question, and the only answer possible, in the last analysis, would be that they, in unison, acted under the name of Ned Ludd. If the question further arises, then, whether any who acted under this name, no matter where and when, could be classified as Luddites, the answer would have to be in the affirmative, but, luckily for the student, no such case is on record as occurring at other places and other times. As to the future possibility of a similar case occurring, the answer feasible would be that they may be called the Luddites but they are not what the present writer here means. A similarity, in this connection, will be found in the existence, both in America and Japan, of baseball teams known as Giants. They are both Giants; no doubt about it, but, nevertheless, they are separate teams and never the same.

The question, thus, will be boiled down to the treatment to be accorded to those machine-desroyers, who acting in the same site and at the same time, did never act under the name of Ned Ludd. If it is established that they may not be included in the Luddites as a whole, the issue will dissolve itself. This does not solve all, however, because there apparently was a close proximity in the nature of the so-called Luddites and others, who also engaged in the acts of machine-destruction. The point would be, then, that the Luddite movement, as a proper noun, definitely referred to such movements of machine-destruction which were rampant in the days of the Industrial Revolution in the Midland and the North marking a climax of such popular moves.

## **(2) On the Causes of the Birth of the Luddites.**

### **1. Hate for Machinery.**

Machines enonomize labour and reduce demand for it. Machines tend to render unnecessary skill and talent in labour, the supply of which is increased by machines, even labour supplied by women and children being mo-

bilized. In this light, it may be said that machines deprive labourers of their job, or work to reduce their wage level. Hence, labourers hate and abhor machines. They are led even to rebel against and destroy machines. The Luddite movement was just an outward expression of this, and that in an extreme form. The cause of the birth of the Luddite movement, thus, will have to be sought in this particular circumstance. The report submitted by the Secret Committee of the House of Lords in 1812 on the "Disturbed State of Certain Counties", for instance, pointed out just as one cause of the Luddite disturbances "the application of machinery to supply the place of labour".<sup>9)</sup>

The most piquant and typical exemplification of this interpretation could be found in the Luddites in Yorkshire, which, being a center of the woollen industry, had early seen machinery being introduced even before the Luddites came to the fore. The common practice there had been that the croppers, employed at the shop of the master dresser, could handle a pair of shears by their hands. Now, the shearing frame, newly introduced, with two or more pairs of shears fixed to the frame, would do the work of no less than four persons. This naturally resulted in some croppers losing jobs and the wage level reduced. These persons promptly formed a body sharing the same feeling of hatred of machinery. Thus, the Luddites in Yorkshire were formed around the croppers and the shearing frames became the target of destruction at their hands. This circumstance makes it evident that the Luddites in Yorkshire had their origin in the universal hatred of machinery. In an effort to further substantiate this interpretation, additional records will here be made use of.

On January 4, 1813, at the Trials in the Castle of York, Mr. Baron Thomson, said :

Those mischievous associations...seem...at first to have had for their object merely the destruction of machinery invented for the purpose of saving manual labour in manufactures.<sup>10)</sup>

and, further :

A notion, probably suggested by evil designing persons, to captivate the working manufacturer, and engage him in tumult and crimes, by persuading him that the use of machinery occasions a decrease of the demand for personal labour, and a consequent decrease of wages, or total want of work.<sup>11)</sup>

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9) The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the year 1812, a new edition, London, 1912, State Papers, p. 391.

10) The Report of Proceedings at York Special Commission, p. 2.

11) *ibid.*

This simply shows that the Luddites were actually motivated by such a notion. Their principle as follows also proves this.

Our methods are persuasive argument, united representation of our claims, and, if need be, the removal of those mechanic rivals of human effort by which callous and heartless employers are bent on supplanting the labour of our hands. But this only in the last resort, all other means exhausted, our righteous claims flouted, our fair demands denied.<sup>12)</sup>

It is recorded that, on a certain winter night in those days, Webster, a local clergyman, remarked to Bamforth, a wholesale dealer:

You say one of these new finishing frames will do the work of four, may be of six men. Aye, also is there talk of looms that shall need neither skill nor care. It may be true, I know not. But, oh! it will be a sore day for this hillside and all the country round when that day shall be. What is to become of those who now keep a decent roof over their heads, and though times be bad can still give bite and sup to wife and bairns.<sup>13)</sup>

The situation was practically the same also in Lancashire and Cheshire. It would be unthinkable to separate the emergence of the Luddite movement from the prevalent hatred of machinery. Being the center of cotton industry, these regions saw destruction of power-looms mainly. True, then, the number of factories with power-looms installed was yet rather limited. It was beyond doubt, of course, that weavers' hatred of power-looms had reached a considerable height. Record shows that the Luddite movement in this area burst out at Stockport, where power-looms presumably were in use in comparatively large numbers.

The situation was a little different with the Luddites in Nottingham. This area thrived on stocking and lace knitting industry. In addition to the ordinary stocking frames, which were narrow machines, there had been for a considerable time a number of wide frames constructed to make pantaloons and fancy stockings called "twills." Now, the demand for both these articles had fallen off. Pantaloons ceased to be sold on the Continent while twills with other fancy stockings, had gone out of fashion. The owners of these frames, instead of discarding them, employed them to manufacture so-called "cut up." This inevitably caused the market to be flooded with inferior quality goods and conscientious manufacturers were obliged either to reduce the price of their merchandise or sit idle by and be starved. The ire of Nottingham labourers eventually exploded against these manu-

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12) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, p. 61.

13) D.F.E. Sykes, Ben O'Bill's, *The Luddite*, p. 19.

facturers. They in unison started vigorous action against them and their wide-frame. And this was the start of the Luddite movement in this district.

The report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords mentioned above, remarked :

This spirit of discontent (amongst other causes to which it has been attributed) was supposed to have been excited or called into action by the use of a new machine,.....<sup>14)</sup>

and, further :

The men engaged in these disturbances were at first principally those thrown out of employ by the use of the new machinery, or by their refusal to work at the rates offered by the manufacturers,<sup>15)</sup>

On the other hand, Hammond viewed the situation in the following vein :

.....in truth, there was no new machinery in use, although, amongst other grievances, there was a new and, as it seemed to the men, an illegitimate adaptation of an old machine,.....<sup>16)</sup>

and said, in part, as follows about the Nottingham Luddites :

A wrong impression of the motive and origin of this campaign is widely prevalent, an impression that is largely due to the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords on the disturbed state of certain counties.<sup>17)</sup>

and seems not to go to the extent of ascribing part of the responsibility for the disturbances to the hate for machinery. Professor Cunningham seems to be of the same opinion.<sup>18)</sup>

On the other hand, the Annual Register for 1811 had the following remark about the Nottingham Luddites :

Their commencement was in the neighbourhood of Nottingham, the hosiers of which town having been obliged, from the decrease of demand for their manufactures, to discharge many of their workmen, much distress necessarily ensued for want of employment. This was enhanced by the new application of a certain wide frame in the weaving of stockings, whereby a considerable saving of manual labour

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14) The Annual Register, 1812, State Papers, p. 385.

15) *ibid.*, p. 386.

16) J. L. and B. Hammond, *ibid.*, pp. 257-258.

17) *ibid.*, p. 257.

18) W. Cunningham. The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in modern Times, 1903, pp. 662-663.



was produced, and a consequent further diminution of hands.<sup>19)</sup>

The Register, elsewhere, said :

For some time past the wholesale hosiers, who have stocking-weaving establishments in the county of Nottingham, have been obliged to curtail their hands ; this produced considerable discontent among the workmen. Their riotous spirits, was, however, increased by the trade having brought into use a certain wide frame for the manufacture of stockings and gaiters, which was a considerable saving in manual labour, tending still farther to the decrease of the hands employed.<sup>20)</sup>

Lord Byron, who, during a trip through the Nottingham area, became an eyewitness of the disturbances raging there, declared in his famous maiden speech in the House of Lords on February 27, 1812 :

Considerable injury has been done to the proprietors of the improved Frames. These machines were to them an advantage, inasmuch as they superseded the necessity of employing a number of workmen, who were left in consequence to starve. By the adoption of one species of Frame in particular, one man performed the work of many, and the superfluous labourers were thrown out of employment.<sup>21)</sup>

Ben O'Bill said :

I think it was at Nottingham, in the back-end of 1811, I first saw any signs of a stir because of the new machinery. A man was shot at Bullwell, near that town, when trying to get at some new stocking-frames. I saw his body brought into the town on a stretcher by two constables.<sup>22)</sup>

The wide-frames, the target of attacks by the Nottingham Luddites, be they never a novel invention, played a part in the general trend to reduce employment of manual labour through its application to a new process of production. The labourers, thrown out of jobs, came to hate the machines, which, in their communal uprisings, they assaulted and destroyed. This may lead us safely to the conclusion that the Nottingham Luddites also had their origin in the prevalent hatred of machinery as a factor working for the deprivation of manual labour.

## 2. Revolutionary Idea.

In the light of these recorded facts, it would be safe to conclude that the Luddites movement were caused by the discontent on the part of la-

19) The Annual Register, 1811, General History, 93.

20) *ibid.*, Chronicle, p. 129.

21) Cobbet's Parliamentary Debates, Vol. XXI, p. 967.

22) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

bourers, who were threatened with the loss of jobs by dint of the inroads of machinery, by their fear of being thrown out of employment, by their apprehension about a possible reduction of their wages, and, lastly, by their hatred of machinery. This, however, does not exhaust all the factors working for the emergence of the Luddite disturbances.

For one thing, the Industrial Revolution could be traced back long before the Luddites, and the destruction of machinery may be said to have started almost simultaneously with the start of the Industrial Revolution. Now, all the machine-destroyers could never be classified as Luddites, who, as a matter of fact, constituted a mere faction of a general movement. True, they acted on a bigger scale than had ever been seen before. There must have been some other causes for this. Could it be proved that, as the Luddites rose in disturbance, invention of new machines in their employment was especially marked? With a possible exception of Yorkshire, however, the situation in general was never such as warranted the above proposition. How, on the other hand, could it be interpreted that the 1811-1812 Luddites, flaring up so suddenly, subsided in no time? Possibly, stringent control exercised by the government authorities accounted for this, or, probably the rebels found out the folly of their action, which, in effect, was tantamount to a futile attempt to stem the currents of a big river with both hands. This, however, is evidently inadequate to explain the Luddite uprising in 1816. What, then, was there which added sparks to the movement, which was at its height in 1811 and 1812?

First to be associated with this would be the influence exerted by the French Revolution. It was only unavoidable that England, separated from France by only a narrow channel, should have felt the vast effect of the Revolution surging on the Continent. It, indeed, shook the island kingdom. Radical ideas in no time flared up there. Paine's "Rights of Man" and Godwin's "Political Justice" charmed the contemporary minds. Some would retort that such was only among sections of so-called intellectuals and that labourers at large remained outsiders to the general trend. It was never the case, however. When Godwin's "Political Justice" became an issue in the House of Lords, Prime Minister William Pitt is recorded to have explained:

A three guinea book could never do so much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare.<sup>23)</sup> and, thus, both the author and his publication could narrowly escape an official indictment. Among the labourers, however, it is reported that they

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23) Kegan Paul, William Godwin, Vol. I, p. 80.

pooled their scanty-filled purses to buy a copy of the famous book and found time to be absorbed in it either under the shadows of trees or in a corner of a public house.<sup>24)</sup> Ben O'Bill, himself an old member of the Luddites, is said, when young, to have commended Payne's "Rights of Man" as a "a very sound and proper book."<sup>25)</sup> Moreover; his cousin, George Mellor, a reputed ring leader of the Yorkshire Luddites, said as follows.

.....

Th' natural rights o' man are not thowt o' in this country, th' unnatural rights o' property ha' swallowed 'em up. It's all property, property.

.....

Th' French ha' more sense nor us. They saw all th' good tnings o' this life were grasped by th' nobles an' th' priests. They saw it were better to be born a beast of the field than a man child. They saw that the people made wealth by their toil; and the seigneurs, that's lords, and the church enjoyed the wealth they made, only leaving them bare enough to keep body and soul together. Aye, they're careful enogh not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. That is, sometimes. Times they over do it. But a trodden worm will turn, an' they turned in France. They sent their proud lords and ladies packing.<sup>26)</sup>

Further, Zachariah Baines, a veteran of the Yorkshire Luddites, is recorded to have concluded his speech at a Luddite meeting, in the following vein:

Down with the bloody aristocrats!.....I have waited long for the dawn of the coming day, and it may be, old as I am, I shall yet see the glorious triumph of democracy.<sup>27)</sup>

Byron, the poet, after seeing with his own eyes the Luddites in action, composed as follows his "Song of Luddites", in which the shrewd poet apparently alluded to a revolutionary trend lurking underneath:

As the Liberty lads over the sea  
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood  
So we, boys, we  
Will die fighting, or live free,

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24) E. V. Zenker. *Der Anarchismus*, 1895, s. 14.

25) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, p. 7.

26) *ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

27) Frank Peel, *The Risings of the Luddites, Chartists & Plugdrawers*. second edition, Heckmondwike, 1888, pp. 55-56.

And down with all kings but King Ludd.

When the web that we weave is complete,  
And the shuttle exchanged for the sword,  
We will fling the winding-sheet  
O'er the despot at our feet,  
And dye it deep in the gore he has poured.

Though black as his heart its hue,  
Since his veins are corrupted to mud,  
Yet this is the dew  
Which the tree shall renew  
Of liberty, planted by Ludd!<sup>28)</sup>

At the Trials in the York Castle on January 13, 1813, Mr. Park, Counsel for Crown, declared that the Luddite movement in Yorkshire was "the dreadful disturbance.....amounting almost to a state of actual rebellion."<sup>29)</sup> Others are recorded to have alluded to the movement as "a crisis little short of open rebellion."<sup>30)</sup>

It would be proper to quote here the following passage from the above-mentioned report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords:

.....it is the opinion of persons, both in civil and military stations, well acquainted with the state of the country, an opinion grounded upon various information from different quarters now before your committee,....., that the views of some of the persons engaged in these proceedings have extended to revolutionary measures of the most dangerous description.<sup>31)</sup>

Some criticized this as an exaggeration deliberately made by the government authorities in an effort to successfully pass a bill for strengthening measures of control. Why, then, were they driven to take such stringent measures? How ironical it was that Byron, who opposed any such control measures, should have composed a song as shown above!

It would, thus, be difficult to deny the influence exerted by the French Revolution on the emergence of the Luddite movement. The fact should be noted, however, that the Revolution on the Continent had broken out as early as 1789 with its ultra-progressive and radical ideas. If the Luddites had been caused only by force of a hatred of machinery and radical

28) The Poetical Works of Lord Byron, London, Frederic Warne and Co. (The London Poets) p. 667.

29) The Report of Proceedings at York Special Commission, p. 8.

30) *ibid.*, p. IV.

31) The Annual Register, 1812, State Papers, p. 391.

revolutionary ideas, the movement should have come up to the fore much earlier. This, in its turn, leads us to a search for some other causes responsible for the emergence of the Luddite movement.

### 3. Social Conditions.

Thus, the contemporary social conditions prevailing in England in those days become a target for our quest for a possible cause of the Luddite movement.

Abroad, England then found itself involved in the Napoleonic wars and, domestically, the country was in the throes of an acute business depression, which was in the worst shape around 1811.

The depression was caused by a sharp decrease of demand, which had been mainly brought about by gigantic speculative activities on the heels of the exploitation of the South American market, Decrees of the Continental System issued by Napoleon and the Orders in Council pertaining to maritime blockade, first promulgated in 1806 and enforced with added vigor after 1810. The Orders in Council eventually forced England to be deprived of its vast market in the United States. It may easily be imagined how severely all these factors combined dealt a blow to England, especially to the manufacturers in the Luddite-ravaged districts, where people groaned under utter business slump while unsold products had to be piled up.

The situation was minutely and eloquently described by Charlotte Brontë, a female writer brought up in Yorkshire, on the very spot where the Luddites raged most furiously, and whose "Shirley", with Yorkshire as its background, records the following dialogue as taking place between Mr. Moore, a local manufacturer, and Mr. Malone, curate of Briarfield,

—Now I, if I know myself, should stand by my trade, my mill, and my machinery.

—Helstone says these three are your gods; that the 'Orders in Council' are with you another name for the seven deadly sins; that Castlereagh is your Antichrist, and the war party his legions.

—Yes; I abhor all these things because they ruin me: they stand in my way: I cannot get on. I cannot execute my plans because of them: I see myself baffled at every turn by their untoward effects.

—But you are rich and thriving, Moore?

—I am very rich in cloth I cannot sell: you should step into my warehouse yonder, and observe how it is piled to the roof with pieces. Roakes and Pearson are in the same condition: America used to be their market, but the 'Orders in Council' have cut that off.<sup>32)</sup>

<sup>32)</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, Thornton ed. Vol. I, p. 31.

To suffer most in the prevailing depression were the labourers. Their wages were reduced, while some of them were thrown out of job.

As common sayings have it, calamities come by twos and threes. For some years at a stretch, farm crops had failed. Naturally, corn price soared up, which, should affect the price levels of other commodities. All these factors combining, living of common people suffered to such an extent as never seen before.

However, there were others who profited from this. The rise of the farm product prices resulted in a better purchasing power on the part of landowners and farmers. Stockpiled commodities could have been sold among these sections of people. Ben O'Bill, already quoted above, said that "the high price of corn.....kept squire and farmer in rich content, and they paid for their cloth like men".<sup>33)</sup> It was only temporary, however, for, even these sections could not stand unaffected by the general trend for long. The suffering on the part of the greater mass of people, especially workers and labourers, remained unalleviated.

The observation described in the foregoing lines will sufficiently explain the circumstances surrounding the eruption of the popular sentiment in the Luddite Movement. The labourers' living, already suffering from the inroads of machinery, was subjected to further privation as a result of the Napoleonic wars and the effect of the Orders in Council, for these had brought about an acute business depression. To make the situation worse, the impact of newly-introduced machinery was further adding to its intensity, which, in turn, spurred the popular hatred of machinery. Acts of machine-destruction multiplied in number as well as in the degree of violence committed, of which, the undertakers were no others than the Luddites. Such, apparently, is a correct interpretation of the situation, which will further be substantiated by the labourers' demand that, although they were not necessarily against machinery, they would nevertheless desire that their employment be suspended temporarily for fear that the condition of the working people be further aggravated.

George Mellor, a ring leader of the Yorkshire Luddites, is said to have once told Ben O'Bill :

"They (masters) cannot stand against us if we are united," said George ; "our weakness lies in action unconcerted and without method. If we set our forces resolutely against the use of these new-fangled substitutes for human labour, we can at least compel the masters to wait till times are better and trade mends. It may be that when the

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33) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, p. 6.

wars are over and the market calls for a larger and quicker output, machinery may be gradually introduced without hardship to those who have grown old in the old methods and who cannot use themselves to new ways.<sup>34)</sup>

Another similar example will be found in the following conversation allegedly exchanged between a worker and Moore, manufacturer, both being characters in the "Shirley":

"Ye see we're ill off—varry ill off: wer families is poor and pined. We're thrown out o' work wi' these frames: we can get nought to do: we can earn nought. What is to be done? Mun we say, wisht! and lig us down and dee? Nay: I've no grand words at my tongue's end, Mr. Moore, but I feel that it would be a low principle for a reasonable man to starve to death like a dumb creatur': —I will n't do't. I'm not for shedding blood: I'd neither kill a man nor hurt a man: and I'm not for pulling down mills and breaking machines: for, as ye say, that way o' going on 'll niver stop invention; but I'll talk—I'll mak' as big a din as ever I can. Invention may be all right, but I know it isn't right for poor folks to starve. Them that governs mun find a way to help us: they mun mak' fresh orderations. Ye'll say that's hard to do: —so mich louder mun we shout out then, for so much slacker will t' Parliament-men be to set on to a tough job."

"Worry the Parliament-men as much as you please," said Moore; "but to worry the mill-owners is absurd; and I, for one, won't stand it."

"Ye're a raight hard 'un!" returned the workman. "Will n't ye gie us a bit o' time? —will n't ye consent to mak' your changes rather more slowly?"<sup>35)</sup>

Thus, it is seen that the contemporary social condition had much to do with the inevitability of the emergence of the Luddites. There is no denying it. This, however, should never go to the extent that other relevant factors are totally ignored. And, there, the present writer cannot help disagreeing with the views advanced by Professor Ashton, for he apparently ignores labourers' hatred of machinery as a pertinent cause of the Luddites rising in revolt. Of course, it would be too much to say that Professor Ashton entirely failed to take note of this, for he did say:

Under-employed and under-fed men were not over-nice in theorizing as to the cause of their distress, and it was natural enough that

34) *ibid.*, p. 48.

35) Charlotte Brontë, *ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

they should strike at the machines that appeared to be taking the bread from their mouths. Some of the unemployment was, indeed, the result of technical change.<sup>36)</sup>

On the other hand, however, the professor went on :

but the chronology of revolt points to the real cause of the trouble. It was in 1811, and again in 1816, when political events and bad harvests had led to depression, that the Luddites destroyed the stocking-frames in the Midlands and the power-looms in the North.<sup>37)</sup>

and ;

An historian has written of "the disasters of the industrial revolution." If by this he means that the years 1760-1830 were darkened by wars and made cheerless by dearth, no objection can be made to the phrase. But if he means that the technical and economic changes were themselves the source of calamity the opinion is surely perverse.<sup>38)</sup>

The professor seems to take the view that machines are profitable, that they are profitable to the manufacturer as well as to the labourer, for the latter's living may be improved by force of machines, and, that, therefore, it was improper to ascribe their poverty to the impact exerted by machinery. According to the professor, the labourers assaulted machinery not because of their hatred of them but because of the business depression, the wars and the famine which had caused the depression.

But, it is one thing that the machines are profitable in reality to the labourers. It is quite another that the labourers think the machines tend to put them into miserable condition and hate them.

The present writer has not the slightest intention to dispute the wisdom of referring to the social condition as constituting one of the main factors leading to the emergence of the Luddites. On the other hand, and at the same time, he is highly sceptical about the wisdom of ignoring, or, to say the least, of making little of the labourer's hatred of machinery, as a cause of the up-rising of the Luddites.

The proper answer in this connection would be that labourers, suffering from business depression, hastened to ascribe it to the effect of machinery being introduced, and were driven to assault machinery. True, depression would sufficiently explain away the prevailing poverty and privation. It,

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36) T.S. Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830*, The Home Univesity Library of Modern Knowledge, 204, p. 154.

37) *ibid.*

38) *ibid.*, p. 161.



however, would not itself explain the rampant attacks of machinery.

Ascribing the emergence of the Luddites to the contemporary social condition alone, to the extent that the hatred of machinery was totally neglected, would be comparable in its irrelevancy to ascribing the cause of a big conflagration to the winds and ignoring the responsibility of a person who failed in the proper control of fire. But for the winds, indeed, there would have been no big fire. But, no big winds alone would have caused the big fire.

### (3) On the Initial Stages of the Luddites

In the preceding chapters, the present writer has endeavoured to clarify the circumstances and causes which, combined, worked to engender the Luddite movement. When, then, did it start as a movement at all?

The Annual Register for 1811 records the following.

The public tranquility had been little disturbed in England, notwithstanding the pressure of the times, during the greatest part of the year; but before its termination, a series of disorders broke out which soon put on a serious aspect, and have been the prelude of a riotous and mischievous disposition in a large tract of the manufacturing districts, the effects of which still continue to be the occasion of much trouble and alarm. Their commencement was in the neighbourhood of Nottingham,.....<sup>39)</sup>

The first reference to the riots at Nottingham appeared in the "Chronicle" of the Annual Register is as late as in November.<sup>40)</sup>

The report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords in 1812 contains the following statement:

The disposition to combined and disciplined riot and disturbance, which has attracted the attention of parliament, and excited apprehension of the most dangerous consequences, seems to have been first manifested in the neighbourhood of the town of Nottingham, in November last, by the destruction of a great number of newly invented stocking-frames.....<sup>41)</sup>

The Preface of the Report of Proceedings at York Special Commission, published in 1813, said in part:

In the spring of the year 1811, disputes arose between the masters and journeymen employed in the trade of weaving stockings and lace, which is carried on in the south-western part of Nottinghamshire, and

39) The Annual Register, 1811, General History, p. 93.

40) *ibid.*, Chronicle, p. 129.

41) The Annual Register, 1812, State Papers, p. 385.

the adjacent parts of Derbyshire and Leicestershire ; and without entering into the particulars of those disputes, which would be beside the present design, suffice it to state, that in the month of November 1811, the discontents had arisen to such a height, that a mob, consisting of several hundred persons, assembled at Sutton in Ashfield in open day, and broke the stocking and lace frames of various obnoxious manufacturers. Before this mob was separated, some of the ringleaders were taken into custody by a party of yeomanry cavalry, and were afterwards committed by the magistrates to Nottingham gaol. From this disaster the malcontents learnt caution ; and as the frames used in this manufacture are of a very delicate texture, and rendered useless by a single blow from a heavy instrument, they seldom, from this time, carried on the work of destruction openly, or in large bodies, but watched the opportunity of effecting their purpose individually, or in small parties, under cover of the night, and in spots where the machinery was least protected. This purpose was aided by the circumstances, in which the manufacture is carried on in the vicinity of Nottingham. The frames, which are of considerable value, commonly belong not to the persons by whom they are worked, but either to the master manufacturers, or to individuals unconnected with the trade, who let them to the artisans at a weekly rent ; and thus the frames are scattered in detached houses about the country, and are usually in the custody of persons who have no interest in protecting them from violence.

In the neighbourhood of Nottingham, which was the focus of turbulence, the malcontents organized themselves into regular bodies, and held nocturnal meetings, at which their future plans were arranged. And, probably with the view of inspiring their adherents with confidence, they gave out, that they were under the command of one leader, whom they designated by the fictitious name of Ned Ludd, or General Ludd, calling themselves Ludds, Ludders, or Luddites. There is no reason to believe that there was in truth any one leader. In each district, where the disaffection prevailed, the most aspiring man assumed the local superiority, and became the General Ludd of his own district. These petty tyrants, doubtless, took their tone from the centre of the operations, but not (so far as has been traced) from any individual.

Under this system the Luddites, in the winter months, destroyed a very considerable number of stocking and lace frames, and infused such a terror into the owners of all, as to drive them to the precau-

tion of removing them from the villages and lone houses, and placing them for security in warehouses, where they could be protected from injury.....<sup>42)</sup>

That Ben O'Bill conceded that :

I think it was at Nottingham, in the back-end of 1811, I first saw any signs of a stir because of the new machinery.<sup>43)</sup>

has already been referred to.

With all these records as evidence, it would be concluded that the start of the Luddites was seen in November, 1811.

Peel, however, after declaring :

The 11th of Mrrch, 1811, is a notable day in the history of Nottinghamshire. On that day commenced a series of riots which, extending over a period of five years, are perhaps unequalled for the skill and secrecy with which they were managed, and the amount of wanton mischief they inflicted.<sup>44)</sup>

recorded :

.....on the 11th of March they struck work, and flocking to the market-place, were there joined by a large number from the adjoining country, and being harangued by several fiery orators, they suddenly resolved to revenge themselves on the masters who had reduced their wages. The local authorities, who had been uneasy at the aspect of affairs for some time, summoned the military to their aid at once, and the turbulent population was overawed and prevented from rioting in the town ; when darkness set in, however, the mob proceeded to the neighbouring village of Arnold, and destroyed upwards of sixty frames. During the succeeding three weeks above two hundred more stocking frames were broken up by bands who seemed to divide and attack many different points at the same time. These bands it was afterwards discovered were united in a society and were bound by an oath not to divulge anything connected with its secret operations.<sup>45)</sup>

and after enumerating the outstanding features of the Luddites, mentioning among others their formation of a rigid society and their acting under oath for a jealous guarding their secrets as well as their allegiance to King Ludd, went on, as follows :

In consequence of the resistance afterwards made to the outrages of the rioters, in the course of which one of them was killed, they became still more exasperated and violent, till the magistrates thought it

42) Proceedings at York Special Commission, pp. vi-vii

43) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

44) F. Peel, *ibid.*, p. 31.

45) *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

necessary to require the assistance of a considerable armed force, which was promptly assembled, consisting at first of local militia and volunteer yeomanry chiefly, to whom were afterwards added about four hundred special constables. The rioters were then dispersed and the disturbances for a time suppressed.<sup>46)</sup>

Of the interview he made ten years before the publication of the second edition of his book in 1888, Peel, in its preface, said :

In collecting material for this subject from the few people I could find in the locality who were old enough to know anything about it from personal experience.....I...saw personally almost everyone then living who were likely to be able to add to my stock of knowledge respecting the Luddites and their doings.<sup>47)</sup>

His writings, based on what he had actually seen and learned, are undoubtedly valuable as relevant data. As a matter of fact, however, Peel's writings did not consist entirely of such hear-says. He obviously had other sources for his information, one of the most outstanding being the chapter which contains the quotation shown above. Excepting the first two quotations above it is mainly based on the report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, the phraseology of which was copied almost word by word in many instances. The paragraph containing the third quotation is seen perfectly identical except the sole expression "afterwards". This shows that these writings were copied from the report. The part immediately preceding this section, however, is different from the report which refers only to the Luddites occurred in November. Therefore, the record about the situation having been placed under control meant originally the subsidence of the Luddite movement which broke out in November.

After Peel, we must take it for granted that the Luddite movement, starting in March, lasted unabated until as late as November. On the contrary, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond record "there was a cessation till November 4, when the campaign started afresh.....<sup>48)</sup>" Viewed in this light, Peel's description of the March incident would be open to question. On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond had the following to say :

The first outburst of frame-breaking at this time took place early in March 1811, when over sixty frames belonging to an obnoxious employer were destroyed in one evening at Arnold. As the month went on a few other frames were broken, and then there was a cessation till November 4, when the campaign started afresh with the des-

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46) *ibid.*, p. 33.

47) *ibid.* Preface.

48) J. L. and B. Hammond, *ibid.*, p. 261.

truction of frames at Arnold, Bulwell, Basford, and other villages.<sup>49)</sup>

What ground did the Hammonds have for this statement? They, after the above-quoted remark, went on to describe the machine-destruction waves after November 4, citing the number of machines destroyed and the value of property damage involved, adding a foot-note in the following vein at the end only:

For account of frame-breaking, see H. O., 42. 119; H. O., 42. 131<sup>50)</sup>

Considering that they usually were bent on clarifying the source of their information, the lack of the mention of any such source precisely at the March incident lead me to wonder wheather the official papers of the Home Ministry failed to mention the so-called March incident. The present writer, unfortunately, has no liberty to have a perusal at those papers and naturally is not in a position to say anything definite about this particular point.

The movement was placed under control comparatively speedily. It never spread out. It may be considered local, sporadic and extemporaneous in nature. In those days England would not infrequently see such cases of machine-destruction and they, as such, would not attract much attention. Those in the countryside, however, who survived the disturbance, were naturally conversant with the situation prevailing in their respective native places. It is probable that all these records came out of their mouth.

But, the report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, reassuring that it had been prepared on the basis of "the great mass of materials,"<sup>51)</sup> failed to refer to the March incident. Materials brought from the countryside had evidently been selected. But, in view of the importance of the March incident, as deciding the date of the first appearance of the Luddites, it would be unthinkable that it should have been dropped and not recorded. Or, the "the great mass of materials" were only about the cases after November. Absence of any mention of the March incident would, then, have been simply natural and reasonable.

Now, the fact that the available materials referred only to the cases after November, should call for close attention. Could it mean that before November no incident of major importance had occurred? The Chronicle of the Annual Register often had recorded local and temporary matters. To be exact, the Chronicle originally was intended for such. Among the records mentioned there, cases of burglary, rural officials' demeanour and of suicides would often be encountered. Thus, mention of the March incident there

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49) *ibid.*, p. 261.

50) *ibid.*, p. 261.

51) The Aunnal Register, 1812, State Papers, p. 390.

would have been only a matter of course. Absence of any such reference, therefore, would mean that there actually was no such occurrence in March. Per chance, the Chronicle might have failed to record it. But, will it be thinkable that the Home Ministry overlooked it?

This, however, does not necessarily mean that the present writer is of the opinion that the actuality of the March incident is to be denied. To deny it altogether would be too hazardous; only he harbors doubts.

The preface to the Report of Proceedings at York Special Commission records that "in the spring of the year 1811, disputes arose between the masters and journeymen employed in the trade of weaving stockings and lace which is carried on in the south-western part of Nottinghamshire, and the adjacent parts of Derbyshire and Leicestershire."

It should be suspected that the dispute mentioned above might have been accompanied by violence, although the following statement in the same preface would indicate that violence including destruction of machinery was seen only in autumn and not in spring.

#### (4) **Termination of the Luddites**

How were the Luddites eventually placed under control and terminated? On this point, many issues involved are apparently open to question.

Regarding the situation in 1811 and 1812, the first factor thinkable would be the effort exerted by the government authorities concerned. Evidently various measures taken by the authorities failed to achieve the desired end. In spite of this, however, those measures in effect exerted a big pressure on the Luddites.

True, dispatch of armed forces to suppress the disturbances is usually said to have been without much efficacy. It should be conceded, however, that the use of armed forces eventually rendered major movements by rioters unfeasible. Already in the middle part of August, 1812, the organised destruction of shearing frames is said to have become out of question in the Leeds and Huddersfield districts.<sup>52)</sup>

Secondly, popular support of the movement was obviously fast declining. It would be too much to say that people at large revolted against the Luddites. It would be safe to say, however, that the movement was quickly losing popular sympathy and support.

Even after the termination of the organised machine-destroying movement, the situation was not necessarily restored to normalcy, for cases of murder of manufacturers or cases of thefts committed either by petty Luddite followers and those acting under its name were not infrequently repor-

<sup>52)</sup> J. L. and B. Hammond, *ibid.*, p. 309.

ted. Continuance of the disturbed condition, for one thing, evidently drove popular sympathy away from the Luddites. That the loss of popular support meant an irreparable blow to the riotous movement may be easily understood once the important role played by such popular mentality in its growth is recalled.

On receipt of a report on the shooting of Holsfall, Ben O'Bill remarked:

I did not sleep a wink that night. Holsfall shot dead! A man done to death in broad daylight by a shot from an assassin lurking behind a wall!.....every instinct of manliness, of fair play, of humanity, rose up within me and cried shame on the bloody deed.<sup>53)</sup>

Mary, a young maiden whom George Mellor, the murderer of Holsfall, was loving in secret, cried:

There is blood upon your hand, George Mellor. Mine it shall never clasp again.<sup>54)</sup>

Of the effect of the murder of Holsfall, Ben O'Bill said:

Holsfall's death had an effect just the opposite to that expected by the Luds. It did not bring the masters to their knees; on the contrary, it hardened and united them. It did not embolden the Luddites; rather they became alarmed at their own extremes.<sup>55)</sup>

Thus, while the Luddites, once rampant almost beyond control, were gradually losing their prestige and declining in powers, a notable incident occurred. It was the repeal of the Orders in Council, effected on June 18, 1812.

It has already been pointed out that the Orders in Council was instrumental in bringing the Luddites to the fore. And now, its repeal actually tolled the knell for the rioters. The following passage in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley" will shed a light on the circumstance in this connection:

On the 18th of June, 1812, the Orders in Council were repealed, and the blockaded ports thrown open. You know very well—such of you as are old enough to remember—you made Yorkshire and Lancashire shake with your shout on that occasion; the ringers cracked a bell in Briarfield belfry; it is dissonant to this day. The Association of Merchants and Manufacturers dined together at Stilbro', and one and all went home in such a plight as their wives would never wish to witness more. Liverpool started and snorted like a river-horse roused among his reeds by thunder. Some of the American merchants felt threatenings of apoplexy, and had themselves bled: all, like wise

53) D.F.E. Sykes, *ibid.*, p. 158.

54) *ibid.*, p. 162.

55) *ibid.*, p. 163.

men, at this first moment of prosperity, prepared to rush into the bowels of speculation, and to delve new difficulties, in whose depths they might lose themselves at some future day. Stocks, which had been accumulating for years, now went off in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; warehouses were lightened, ships were laden; work abounded, wages rose: the good time seemed come. These prospects might be delusive, but they were brilliant—to some they were even true. At that epoch, in that single month of June, many a solid fortune was realized.<sup>56)</sup>

Thus, with business steadily recovering, the manufacturing industry became more brisk, which, in its turn, required more hands in employment. Wages soared up, with the consequence that labourer's living was substantially improved. No ground, then, was left for further Luddite riots.

With the month of April, 1812, as its peak, the Luddite movement was now about to subside and terminate at long last.

The movement, however, was not finally crushed. The old spirit existed and woke up on many occasions. Provincial leaders continued to travel around and meet in council with their scattered comrades. Nottingham became the center of the underground activity. To prepare for a possible uprising, arms were collected at various places and over an extensive area.<sup>57)</sup> A temporary business boom was barely efficacious in preventing the popular sentiment from bursting into a general explosion. A worsening of the situation would easily have been conducive to an extremity. Irony of the fate was too obvious, for such worsening of the situation did happen right after the arrival of the longawaited peace.

It is evident that peace reduces drastically the munitions demands, which entails a much curtailed demand for working hands. Soldiers, demobilized, come back only to aggravate the crowded condition of the slums. On the other hand, however, restoration of peace will mean the opening of a vast overseas market. Exports will mount. And, such was exactly what the Englishman expected—only to be greeted by disillusionment. The situation rapidly worsened.

It has earlier been mentioned that the Luddites resurged in 1816 in a popular uprising aiming at the destruction of machinery.

How, then, were the Luddites, after their resurgence, terminated?

Mr. and Mrs. Hammond hold the execution of those arrested on charges of involvement in the Loughborough incident as responsible for this, as:

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56) Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, Vol. II. p. 457.

57) Frank Peel, *ibid.*, p. 288.



As a measure for the repression of Luddism, the execution of these men was successful. The boldest spirits who, .....had usually volunteered for the 'jobs' were either dead, or transported, or had fled the country.<sup>58)</sup>

Further, they say:

After the execution of the Loughborough Luddites the lace masters were no longer troubled by fears that their frames would be broken if they lowered their pay.<sup>59)</sup>

And, they come to the conclusion:

.....the bloodstained retribution which followed the destruction of the machines in Heathcoat's Loughborough factory closed the epoch of Luddism.<sup>60)</sup>

Of course, there is no denying that the effect exerted on the Luddite movement by the execution of the criminals. The present writer does not entirely oppose the view that the execution, in effect, was the curtain-drawers of the Luddism. The case may be sufficient to indicate the date of the termination of the Luddite movement, but never sufficient to explain how such termination did actually come about. To be short, the present writer can never reconcile himself to the view that the execution alone was responsible for the eventual termination of the Luddite movement.

It has already been described how the recovery of business worked to quiet down the disturbances in 1811 and 1812, and how a worsening of the situation in general resulted in a resurgence of the popular movement in 1816. Would it be proper, then, to say in conclusion that with the execution of the Luddites in 1817, the movement as such was made to blow itself out? With the execution, the most daring among the Luddite elements had perished, which was already pointed out by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond. These recalcitrant elements, too, were evidently the product of the circumstances. Once the situation improved, they would never come up to the fore. Even if they did ever come out, no people would "dance to the pipe." On the other hand, if the situation worsens, they would be sure to make their appearance, and no effort would succeed to root them out. There would be no end of successors inheriting the inherited banner. Even without a proper leadership, the movement as such would continue to thrive, as pointed out by Peel as follows:

The wholesale execution of the leaders (in 1813) seemed to crush

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58) J. L. and B. Hammond, *ibid.*, p. 242.

59) *ibid.*, p. 243.

60) *ibid.*, p. 235.

the movement to a great extent in the West Riding, but though it never afterwards made much headway, leaders being wanting, and many of the better class of workmen holding aloof, still the movement was not finally crushed.<sup>61)</sup>

As a second important factor leading to the eventual termination of the second phase Luddites, the spreading inclination to charity, as spontaneously growing out among the public, may be cited. For instance, the preface to the Annual Register for 1816 has the following message :

During the earlier part of the year, the distress had appeared particularly confined to the agricultural labourers, at least the evils pressing upon them were those which had almost exclusively engaged the attention of the parliamentary speakers. But as the season advanced, and an unusual inclemency of weather brought with it the prospect of a general failure in the harvests of Europe, and a rapid rise in the corn market, much more serious distress burst forth among the manufacturing poor, who began to murmur that their reduced wages would no longer satisfy them with bread.

By the sudden failure of the war-demand for a vast variety of articles, which was not compensated as yet by the recovery of any peace-market, foreign or domestic, thousands of artisans were thrown out of employment, and reduced to a state of extreme want and penury. A detestable spirit of conspiracy which manifested itself in the early part of the year in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Huntingdon, and Cambridge, directed against houses, barns, and rick-yards, which were devoted to the flames, was probably the result of a want of agricultural employment, joined to the love of plunder. But the distressing scenes which afterwards took place amongst the colliers of Staffordshire, and the attempts made by the assembled workmen of the iron manufacturing districts of South Wales, to stop by force the working of the forges, arose from the causes above referred to. In general, however, the workmen conducted themselves without violence, and received with gratitude the contributions made for their relief.<sup>62)</sup>

Poverty and privation suffered by the destitute in 1816 was, indeed, beyond description. Sympathy with their plight correspondingly arose. It took the form of the collection of relief funds and offering of employment. However, the author of "A History of Thirty Years' Peace" was quick to point out the folly of sympathizing these people with relief funds, in the following

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61) Frank Peel, *ibid.*, p. 288.

62) The Annual Register, 1816, p. iv.

vein :

However local charity may have mitigated the intensify of the evil arising out of the general exhaustion of capital, a calm review of the more ostentatious exertions of that period forces upon us the conclusion that such attempts are for the most part wholly inefficient—more calculated to produce a deceptive calm in the minds of those who give, than to afford any real or permanent benefit to those who receive.<sup>63)</sup>

If the author is to be trusted, it would be conceded, to say the least, that, while charity itself was no doubt instrumental in pacifying the Luddite elements, it was not powerful enough to terminate it once and for all.

Where, then was the cause for the termination of the Luddite movement to be found? The present writer is of the opinion that it should be found in the movement for a parliamentary reform.

There is no gainsaying that popular living is largely affected by politics. A betterment of popular living should be preceded by better politics, which, in turn, should come only after a better parliament being brought into existence.

Now, with people at large faced with an extremely destitute livelihood, it was only natural that people turned to the issue of a parliamentary reform.

It stands to record that, in those days, people were suffering much from heavy taxes imposed. The Napoleonic wars entailed England's military expenditures amounting to no less than £ 831,500,000, of which £ 391,000,000, nearly a half, had to be financed with the tax revenue.<sup>65)</sup> Such, indeed, was a heroic<sup>66)</sup> political measure, for posterity would be relieved of the burdens. It, nevertheless, meant an exorbitant burden on the shoulders of the contemporary nation. They were capable to share the burden only while the national destiny was at stake. With the end of the warring period, however, the entire circumstance would change and people would begin to find the tax burdens unbearably heavy.

English parliament, then, was under the sway of a handful of privileged persons and popular sentiments were often barred from being reflected on the parliamentary floor. This, unavoidably, led to a cry for a parliamentary reform. Once the issue was taken up in parliament in June, 1816, the entire national interest was immediately focussed on its outcome.

“It passed away from the patronage of a few aristocratic lovers of

63) Harriet Martineau, *A History of Thirty Years' Peace*, London, 1877, Vol. I, p. 67.

65) L. S. Wood and A. Wilmore, *The Romance of the Cotton Industry in England*, London, 1927, pp. 146-147.

66) *ibid.*, p. 146.

popularity, to be advocated by writers of 'twopenny trash' and to be discussed and organised by 'Hampden Clubs' of hungering philanthropists and unemployed 'weaver-boys'.<sup>67)</sup>

And, as a matter of course, the issue of the Luddites was gradually absorbed in the bigger one.

The figure of William Cobbett is closed up as one who played a significant part at this juncture. Publisher since 1802 of the weekly *Political Register*, he was known as an author with clear logics and personal integrity. On November 2, 1816, he devoted the whole pages of his paper to "An Address to the Journeymen and Labourers of England, Scotland and Ireland," in which he ascribed their poverty to the weight of taxes and found remedies in lessening the tax burdens through parliamentary reform.

On April 30, the same year, he published "A Letter to the Luddites" in his paper, in which he appealed to the rioters, pointing out the utter folly of machine-destruction violence. First, dealing with the benefits of machinery being bestowed upon mankind, he took the trouble to clarify the harmlessness of machines in their relation to the journeymen. As has already been explained, the Luddites held machinery responsible for the labourer's privation, and, from this point of view, hated them, rejected them, and went to the extremity of destroying them. Now, Cobbett came out with an explanation of the multifarious benefits machinery would bring about and with a persuasion that they, thus, would entail no harm whatsoever to befall the general run of labourers. If machines are exempted from the responsibility for the poverty-stricken condition of labourers, what, then, is to be held responsible for it as poverty itself continues to exist unremedied? He explained it as following

Your distress, that is to say, that which you now more immediately feel, arises from want of employment with wages sufficient for your support. The want of such employment has arisen from the want of a sufficient demand for the goods you make. The want of a sufficient demand for the goods you make has arisen from the want of means in the nation at large to purchase your goods. This want of means to purchase your goods has arisen from the weight of the taxes co-operating with the bubble of paper-money. The enormous burden of taxes and the bubble of paper-money have arisen from the war, the sinecures, the standing army, the loans, and the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank; and it appears very clearly to me, that these never would have existed, if the Members of the House of Commons had

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67) Harriet Martineau, *ibid*, p. 72.

been chosen annually by the people at large.<sup>68)</sup>

That the contention of William Cobbett was widely accepted with a peculiar force of persuasion and influence was evident from the following passage written by Samuel Bamford:

At this time the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts of South Lancashire, in those of Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham; also in many of the Scottish manufacturing towns. Their influence was speedily visible. He directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings—misgovernment; and to its proper corrective—parliamentary reform. Riots soon become scarce, and from that time they have never obtained their ancient vogue with the labourers of this country.<sup>69)</sup>

Indeed, it is beyond any doubt that he thus gave a new orientation to the "discontent" on the part of labourers. Justice should be done also to the part played by his Register in suppressing the Luddites' acts of violence. His "Letter to the Luddites", especially, is preservedly acclaimed as "a master-piece of reasoning against the ignorant hostility to machinery, and must have been far more effectual than a regiment of dragoons."<sup>70)</sup>

Thus, in response to Cobbett's appeal, the Luddite movement gradually evolved into a wider movement for a parliamentary reform.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Cobbett's writings sowed the seeds of bigger dangers than mere acts of violence committed by irated popular rioters. Cobbett aimed at training labourers for active politicians and affording a predominating status to a class of people most rash and most uncontrollable. Dangers, inherent in this, were all too obvious. Cobbett's writings were feared by his opponents and admired by his followers. The report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, submitted on February 19, 1817, stated, in part, as follows:

Whatever may be the real object of these clubs (Hampden Clubs) in general, your Committee have no hesitation in stating, from information on which they place full reliance, that in far the greater number of them, and particularly in those which are established in the great manufacturing districts of Lancashire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire, and which are composed of the lower order of artizans,

68) Cobbett, John M. and Cobbett, James P.: *Selections from Cobbett's Political Works*, Vol. V, p. 25.

69) Bamford's *Passages in the Life of a Radical and Early Days*, in two volumes, edited with an introduction by Henry Dunckley, London 1843, Vol. II, pp. 11-12.

70) Harriet Martineau, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 75.

nothing short of a revolution is the object expected and avowed.<sup>71)</sup>

Thus, disturbances broke out in rapid succession. The "atmosphere of plots" pervaded. The March of Blanketeers in the Luddite district, the Derbyshire Insurrection and the Peterloo Massacres were only a few among the many cases of disturbances in those days.

Some, then, would find another Luddite uprising in these disturbances, Peel being one among them. He termed the Derbyshire Insurrection a Luddite movement, and remarked to the following effect, interpreting that when the Insurrection terminated the Luddite movement itself was likewise terminated:

After this Luddism died out in Nottinghamshire and the adjoining counties.<sup>72)</sup>

Evidently the labourers in this district were involved in the movement for a parliamentary reform. This is obvious from the above-mentioned report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons. It was, then, a matter of course that certain elements of the Luddites actually took part there. It would even be safe to assume that they formed the central figures in the movement. We have already mentioned that their program had an item on a "general rising", and, in this light, it should not be wondered at even if some critics found a Luddite rising in the movement.

However, the present writer is inclined to interpret that all these cases of disturbances were the result of a general movement for a parliamentary reform, into which the Luddite movement as such had been absorbed.

There, indeed, were committed no acts of machine destruction. The Luddites unaccompanied with acts of machine destruction, would be comparable to a canary without a song or a cavalryman without a horse. As has been explained earlier, Mr. and Mrs. Hammand also found the time of the termination of the Luddites in the Loughborough execution, notwithstanding they knew the contention advanced by Peel.

How, then, should the subsequent cases of the acts of machine destruction be explained? True, such acts did occur subsequently, notably among them being the case of the destruction of power-looms in the Lancashire districts in 1826. It was so reminiscent of the Luddites, as eloquently evidenced by a "besonders malerische Beschreibungen"<sup>73)</sup> in "A History of the Thirty Years' Peace"<sup>74)</sup> or by records contained in the Annual Register.<sup>75)</sup>

71) The Annual Register, 1817, General History, p. 16.

72) Frank Peel, *ibid.*, p. 295.

73) Gustaf F. Steffen, *Studien zur Geschichte der Englischen Lohnarbeiter mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Veränderungen ihrer Lebenshaltungen*, II, s. 294.

74) Harriet Martineau, *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 24-27.

75) The Annual Register, 1826, Chronicle, pp. 63-68.

Will it be proper and adequate, however, to call these outbursts by the name of the Luddites? The only pertinent answer here would be to say that while the Luddites were machine destroyers, all the machine destroyers are not always the Luddites.

## Errata

	<i>error</i>	<i>correct</i>
<i>p.</i> 10. <i>l.</i> 8.	haydly	hardly
	foot-note	
	2) 3, edition	3. edition
	6) Revolution	Révolution
<i>p.</i> 11. <i>l.</i> 20.	an	a
	26. incidents	incident
<i>p.</i> 12. <i>l.</i> 25.	machine-desroyers	machine-destroyers
	<i>l.</i> 39. incresed	increased
	<i>l.</i> 39. eben	even
<i>p.</i> 14. <i>l.</i> 17.	practicaly	practically
	<i>l.</i> 27. indystry	industry
	<i>l.</i> 32. twilis	twills
	foot-note 12) ibid	Ben O'Bill's, The Luddites
<i>p.</i> 16. <i>l.</i> 28.	pplication	application
<i>p.</i> 18. <i>l.</i> 12.	tnings	things
<i>p.</i> 19. <i>l.</i> 12.	January 13,	January 5,
<i>p.</i> 20. <i>l.</i> 35.	your	you
<i>p.</i> 21. <i>l.</i> 5.	which, should	which should
	<i>l.</i> 6. suffered to	suffered almoat to
	<i>l.</i> 21. wars and	wars, especially
	<i>l.</i> 29. their employment	the employment of machinery
<i>p.</i> 22. <i>l.</i> 30.	elevant	relevant
<i>p.</i> 26. <i>l.</i> 14.	secreey	secrecy
	<i>l.</i> 20. te	to
<i>p.</i> 28. <i>l.</i> 11.	incidedt	incident
	<i>l.</i> 28. the " the	, " the
	were	may be
<i>p.</i> 29. <i>l.</i> 8.	Refort	Report
	<i>l.</i> 28. August	April
<i>p.</i> 35. <i>l.</i> 13.	April	November
<i>p.</i> 36. <i>l.</i> 19.	haxe	have